

BRITISH INTER-UNIVERSITY CHINA CENTRE

**Market Leninism: Party Schools and Cadre Training in
Contemporary China**

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BICC WORKING PAPER SERIES, No. 3

August 2007

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Abstract

This paper interrogates the Chinese Communist Party's efforts to standardize, modernize and sanitize the Chinese administration, focusing specifically on the training to raise the "quality" (*suzhi*) and "ability" (*nengli*) of Chinese officials ("cadres"). In cadre training the three main prongs of administrative reform – institutional change, ideological innovation and changes in administrative practice – meet most directly. The main fieldwork sites for this project are the provincial party school in Kunming and lower-level (prefecture and county) party schools in Yunnan, with additional fieldwork carried out on the central institutions in Beijing.

Cadre training is more than the exercise of top-down control: content, qualifications earned, and application in daily work are the outcome of the interplay between higher-level pressures and local realities. Cadre training has important inter-regional and international dimensions, with programmes for cadres to spend periods in more "advanced" areas or abroad. At the other, local end, cadre training is a crucially important prong in the Chinese state's long-term civilizing project to bring modern, unifying governance to even the most remote corners of the nation.

Modernization of cadre training has proceeded along the two lines of centralization and marketization. On the one hand, reform of cadre training is a national enterprise in which the central authorities are the driving force. In the other hand, the marketization of cadre training since 2002 has led to a proliferation of course providers across China. It has also turned party schools themselves into more diverse and open providers. Much of this is only for the better, and governments can now tailor training much more to the needs of the professional managers that now dominate the country's cadre corps. However, the paper demonstrates that both central initiatives and the market mechanism favour schools and governments in China developed regions. As local party schools deteriorate and central requirements of the quality and quantity of cadre training continue being raised, governments in these areas are forced to spend more money on off-site training programmes at prestigious institutions elsewhere, further adding to the already very precarious financial situation at their local party schools.

Biography

Frank Pieke (Amsterdam 1957) is the Director of BICC. He is University Lecturer in the Modern Politics and Society of China at the University of Oxford and a fellow of St Cross College. Before moving to Oxford in 1995, he was University Lecturer at the University of Leiden. He took his first degrees in cultural anthropology at the University of Amsterdam (B.A. 1979 and M.A. 1982), then spent a year in Beijing studying Chinese language and history (1983), before taking his Ph.D. in cultural anthropology at the University of California, Berkeley (1992). Frank Pieke's current research interests are the administrative and political reform in China and migration to, from and within China. His general anthropological interests revolve around the issues of social action, agency and personhood.

Frank Pieke is currently working on a monograph on cadre training and party schools in China of which this working paper is a part. The book has the provisional title *Market Leninism: Cadre Training, Party Schools and the Chinese Communist Party*. His most recent book is *Transnational Chinese: Fujianese Migrants in Europe* (with Pál Nyíri, Mette Thunø and Antonella Ceccagno, 2004). Earlier books include *The Social Position of the Dutch Chinese* (published in Dutch in 1988 and in Chinese in 1992) and *The Ordinary and the Extraordinary*:

An Anthropological Study of Chinese Reform and the 1989 People's Movement in Beijing (1996). A personal witness of the protest movement that rocked Beijing and China in 1989, he subsequently built up one of the world's largest collections of documents and audiovisual materials on the movement at the International Institute of Social History in Amsterdam. Recent articles include "The Genealogical Mentality in Modern China" (*The Journal of Asian Studies*, 2003); "Beyond Control? The Mechanics and Dynamics of 'Informal' Remittances between Europe and Africa" (*Global Networks*, with Nicholas Van Hear and Anna Lindley, 2007); "Community and Identity in the New Chinese Migration Order" (*Population, Space and Place*, 2007); "Contours of an Anthropology of the Chinese State: Political Structure, Agency and Economic Development in Rural China" (*Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, 2004); and "The Politics of Rural Land Use Planning in China" (In Peter Ho, ed. *Developmental Dilemmas: Land Reform and Institutional Change in China*, 2005).

Market Leninism: party schools and cadre training in contemporary China

1. Party rule and ideology in contemporary China

In the study of contemporary China, Maoism and its successor ideologies (Deng Xiaoping Theory, the “Three Represents”) are usually dismissed as blatant lies that merely serve to coat the CCP’s rule in a thin veneer of legitimacy, rather than as serious attempts to define socialism and the CCP’s role and vision. In this paper I will not take issue with this: the current official ideology is indeed shallow, deceitful and, most damning of all, downright boring. However, this does not mean that ideology is therefore unimportant at the level of practical governance.

Cynicism about the state and denunciations of the CCP and its corrupt cadres continue to be widespread in China, but – and this is where outsiders often get it wrong – is only infrequently coupled by a fundamental rejection of the *status quo*. Since the late 1990s, it has become increasingly clear that the weakening of the Chinese state has not happened. Capitalizing on rapidly rising prosperity and continued economic growth, the state has reinvented itself, putting the rule of the CCP on an increasingly solid footing. In short, it seems that the reformers around Deng Xiaoping who assumed power in 1978 were right and Western, particularly American proponents of the “peaceful transformation” thesis were wrong: market reform and socialist governance are, for now at least, perfectly compatible.

Simultaneously, the Chinese Communist Party invested considerable resources in ideologically redefining its place in Chinese society from a “revolutionary party” to a “ruling party”, since 2000 formulated as the Party’s “Three Represents” (*sange daibiao*). The party is no longer the “vanguard of the proletariat”, but the representative of the fundamental interests of the broad mass of the population, advanced productive forces, and advanced culture. This formulation can be read both very inclusively and very exclusively, depending on the issue of the day, but clearly the working class is no longer especially privileged.

However, we should not treat such truths emanating from the Party’s ideological apparatus with more respect than they get in China itself. In the Maoist period, the party and the state apparatus in the final analysis was a mere tool to achieve that what really mattered: a socialist utopia. In this situation, the question of faith in the ideology was deadly serious, often literally so, quite apart from how true or convincing it might have been.

Currently, the socialist utopia has been replaced by a technocratic objective of a strong, peaceful and modern China that is almost synonymous with strong, effective and forward-looking government. With it, the content of and faith in the Party’s ideology itself has become much less of an issue: one could even say that any ideological construction that justifies continued party rule would be just as good as any other. Not only is faith in socialism equated with loyalty to the party-state and acceptance of its continued right to authoritarian rule. This also was the case during high Maoism. Much more seriously, the means and end have swapped positions. Ideology is no longer the end served by party rule, but the mere means by which party rule is perpetuated.

In this spirit, in this paper I will not look at ideology as a separate topic of research, but will investigate the deployment of ideology as part of the party-state's ongoing quest to reproduce and reinvent itself: ideology is treated as an inseparable aspect of governmental practice. It is my belief that only an understanding of these efforts will get us any closer to understanding China's true miracle: despite many fundamental changes since the onset of the reforms, China has been able to maintain a remarkable stability and direction. In my view, China's unique administrative structure, with a finely struck and negotiable balance between centralization and devolution, and between selfish (and often corrupt) behavior of officials and party discipline is at the heart of this success story. If we accept this as a working hypothesis, we fundamentally have to reassess the Chinese communist Party (CCP) itself. The CCP is not the problem that China has to overcome; quite the contrary, the CCP's blend of modernist adaptability and Leninist ideological and organizational principles lies at the root of 25 years of economic growth and social stability.

From this follows that, if we want to understand the changes in China, we also have to understand the changes that have taken place within the CCP itself. In my research I tackle these questions by interrogating the efforts to standardize, modernize and sanitize the practice and ethos of administration. Of course, such efforts are hardly new in China. Many political campaigns of the Maoist era were partly or chiefly devoted to bringing local cadres to heel, fighting bourgeois corruption and bureaucratization, and reinvigorating the revolutionary spirit. Yet reform-era administrative reforms are fundamentally different. The solution for the ills of China's administration is sought not in rekindling the revolution, but, quite the contrary, in strengthening and rationalization of bureaucratic structures, procedures and attitudes.

My research on what we could call the bureaucratization of the Chinese bureaucracy focuses on the reform of the cadre system (the training, appointment, evaluation, promotion and dismissal of government and party officials and locally elected or appointed leaders), and, more specifically, the education, training and qualification that is intended to raise the "quality" (*suzhi*) of such cadres.

Cadre training and management are a truly national enterprise in which the central authorities are not only the driving force, but also take on an increasing number of tasks. At the other, regional end, cadre training is a crucially important prong in the Chinese state's long-term civilizing project to bring modern, unifying governance to even the most remote corners of the nation. Cadre training has also developed important inter-regional and international dimensions, with countless programs negotiated by local or national schools or authorities that enable cadres to spend periods of a few weeks to a few months in schools in other, more "advanced" areas, or indeed abroad.

Cadre training may appear to be a dull Maoist backwater best left to the ideological hacks that supposedly instill sterile ideological messages in those that are paid to pretend to believe anyway. However, in reality, cadre training actually is a rapidly moving and actively debated policy area that puts some of the fundamental issues and choices that confront the party in especially sharp relief. A better understanding of the policies and practices of cadre training yields a direct insight in how the CCP views itself. These insights not only go beyond the empty ideological pronouncements of the "Three Represents", but also help us understand the future that the party charts out for itself as China's "ruling party."

My main fieldwork site for this research project is the provincial party school *cum* school of public administration in Kunming, Yunnan. I have visited there three times in April 2004, November and December 2004 and September 2005. During the longest visit in November 2004, I also undertook short trips to visit lower-level (prefecture and county) party schools in Qujing and Honghe prefectures in Yunnan. During the first two visits to Yunnan I spent most of my time interviewing school administrators, teachers and students, observing lectures and even one seminar class and as much as possible participating in student life. I also interviewed provincial and prefectural officials involved in cadre training and personnel management. During my third visit in September of this year, I made preparations for a questionnaire survey of all students on short-term training courses held at the provincial party school during the autumn of 2005 term, which yielded almost 500 valid returns. After my work in Yunnan, I concentrated my efforts on the centre in Beijing. Although I have been unable to gain permission for longer-term research at one of the central schools, I have managed to interview informally administrators, teachers and also a few students at the central level, including in the Party's central Organization Department, the National School of Administration and the Central Party School. I have also conducted interviews at Tsinghua, Peking and Renmin universities, the three central universities that play a key role in providing non-political cadre training, and at the party school of Beijing municipality.

2. Party schools and cadre training

Cadre training is at the very core of the CCP's tradition of revolutionary governance. The existence of a well-developed system of cadre schools and other training facilities dates back to at least the Yan'an period of the late 1930 and early 1940s. Party schools had suffered badly during the Cultural Revolution, and many in fact re-opened their doors only in the late 1970s. In 1982 and 1983, the Centre issued several documents that aimed to put things in order. As a result, the contours of the role of party schools in the effort to "establish a cadre corps that is, as Deng Xiaoping put it, more revolutionary, younger, more knowledgeable and more specialized" (*ganbu duiwu de geminghua, nianqinghua, zhishihua, zhuananyehua de jianshe*), to be developed much more fully in the 1990s and 2000s, quickly became visible. However, my interviews with older teachers at the Yunnan party school indicate that in the 1980s party schools were poorly funded, and in general were often considered leftovers of Maoist times when being "red" took precedence over being "expert." In short, political education of cadres was anything but a policy priority.

The standing of cadre training and party schools changed greatly from 1989 onward. The "turmoil" (*dongluan*, later reclassified as "disturbance", *fengbo*) of that year and its violent repression served as an important wake-up call to the Chinese leadership. After the crackdown on June 4th, the party leadership was very quick with a strategy to avoid a repetition of events in the future: socialism needed to be put on a solid footing through administrative reform, party building and political education.

In September 1990, the party centre followed this up with the *Circular regarding the strengthening of the work of party schools*.¹ The circular urged party schools “to become the furnace in which the strengthening of cadres’ party spirit is forged (*chengwei ganbu jiaqiang Dangxing duanlian de ronglu*).” This phrase would become a stock formula in all official documents on cadre training. The Center’s circular emphasized in particular that party schools should hold firmly to the connection between theory and practice and should raise the quality of teaching and the level of research.

More specifically to cadre training, the Circular proceeded to specify under five headings the work that lay ahead, namely raising the “quality” (*suzhi*) of cadres. First, cadres should have a better grasp of Marxist theory, China’s national conditions and be able to apply a Marxist position to concrete issues and circumstances. Second, cadres should uphold the basic party line, the four basic principles, reform and opening up, and should oppose bourgeois liberalization. Third, cadres should believe in socialism and unconditionally carry out the Party’s strategic objectives and tasks. Fourth, cadres should dedicate themselves to unselfishly serving the people. Fifth, cadres should carry out democratic centralism and work in unison also with cadres whose viewpoint they might not share.

“Quality”, one of the main multi-purpose catchwords of the post-1989 reforms, in this context thus simply boils down to a re-affirmation of the old principle of Leninist rule, namely that party cadres are the loyal instrument of party rule. Upholding the Leninist quality of cadres through training is also organizationally backed up, and thus actually has more bite than one might think: party schools not only must train, but also inspect and investigate their pupils. Promotions are not simply conditional on having spent the required time idling away at a party school, but also require that the party school can report back to the relevant organization department on the pupil’s satisfactory performance during training.

However, what is important and new here is the extent to which party schools should systematize and standardize their education to ensure a regular pattern of rigorous and high-quality training and re-training. Moreover, party schools were given a much higher profile in research and propaganda than in the past to help the party tackle the new challenges created by reform and opening up in a way that continues to be consistent with socialism. In other words, party schools were to be the party’s principal ideological and policy think tanks, and were encouraged to seek greater autonomy in carrying out their work. As part of this, the image of party schools would also have to be changed. Party schools should no longer be seen as the mouldy remnants of a tainted past, secretive and inward looking. Party schools were to become the sanitized and modernized exterior of party rule, a symbol and promise of the party’s new confidence that continued market reform would deliver not a capitalist, but a bright socialist future.

¹ *Guanyu jiaqiang dangxiao gongzuo tongzhi* (Notice regarding the work of strengthening party schools). Summarized in Zhonggong Yunnan Shengwei Dangxiao Jianshi Bianxiezue (Editorial group of the brief history of the Yunnan Chinese Communist Party Committee Party School) (2000) *Zhonggong Yunnan Shengwei Dangxiao Jianshi (Brief history of the Yunnan Chinese Communist Party Committee Party School)*, Kunming: Yunnan Renmin Chubanshe, pp. 170-172.

However, in 1990 all of this was still a promise. The role of the party schools in reaching out to society and indeed the world gradually rose with the increasing prominence of Hu Jintao at the Centre from 1992 onwards, culminating in his appointment as general party secretary in 2002. Hu has a particularly strong and enduring commitment to cadre training and the modernization of the cadre system through his tenure as president of the Central Party School from 1993 until 2002. After the installation of the new central leadership around Hu Jintao had been successfully completed at the 16th Party Congress in 2002, a series of new initiatives regarding cadre training have seen the light of day as part of a further drive to strengthen the party and its leading role.² Several of the developments that I witnessed at or below the provincial level in Yunnan clearly were influenced by these national developments. Conversely, some of the chronic problems in cadre training that persisted at the local level were the reason for further initiatives, particularly the most recent round of changes in the run-up to the new, 11th Five-Year Plan in 2005 and 2006.

In the new era, the CCP leadership tends to react to priority issues and problems largely by strengthening central institutions, spending more money at the central level and centralizing control over policy making and implementation. There is, in general, a great belief in social engineering that applies modern scientific methods to developmental issues (*kexue fazhanguan*): the party puts an even greater faith in the healing power of science than in the past. This means that it will have to break the mould of the traditional governmental structures that are not only highly compartmentalized and ossified, but also devolve a great deal of autonomy to local levels of government. This new ethos enables the leadership to take bold steps quickly and tackle problems that previously seemed intractable. However, this approach also deepens the rift between the centre and the developed coastal areas that have the money and political access to play along on the one hand, and the central and interior parts of China on the other.

Cadre training is no exception: strengthening the ideological and administrative “quality” of cadres is reduced to a governmental problem that requires the right application of technocratic solutions. The common thread that runs through the initiatives and exhortations of recent years is a clear impatience, if not frustration with the conventional methods and institutions of cadre training. Cadre training had been given much more prominence and priority since the early 1990s, yet much of what had been done had in fact amounted to just more of the same. Cadre training was better funded, much more professional, broader in scope, emphasized both ideology and skills training, and catered for a much larger constituency of leading and ordinary cadres than ever before, but the basic philosophy behind it had not changed from the early days when the party still was a revolutionary organization. The cat may have gotten a lot fatter, but not necessarily caught more mice.

In the new initiatives, instilling a proper understanding of ideological orthodoxy obviously remains paramount, both to ensure that cadres continue to submit to Leninist party discipline and as an instrument in the fight against corruption. However, training should also equip cadres with

² The key document here is the *Resolution on the strengthening of the establishment of the party's ruling capacity* (Zhonggong Zhongyang Guanyu jiaqiang dang de zhizheng nengli jianshe de jue ding) passed at the Fourth Plenum of the Central Committee of the Sixteenth Party Congress on 19 September 2004. Online at <http://www.china.org.cn/chinese/2004/Sep/668376.htm>, checked 17 September 2006.

the ability to deal flexibly with complex issues, apply their knowledge creatively and independently, and accept that continuous learning is a normal part of their work. The professional training that cadre training has to supply is no longer limited to the specific skills (English, computer use) and specialist knowledge of the 1990s, but calls for a completely different management style. In order to become the “ruling party” that it wants to be, the party has proclaimed that it also has to become a “learning party” (*xuexixing zhengdang*). Cadre training and research at party schools should contribute to the party’s “ruling capacity” (*dang de zhizheng nengli*) that draws on core social science disciplines. In other words, the party wants to have its cake and eat it. Cadres continue to be bound by the ideology and practice prescribed by Leninist party discipline, but should also become modern, competent managers of increasingly complex organizations.

The initiative in the developments after 2002 is clearly in the hands of the Centre, which includes the Central Party School, the National School of Administration and a few model regional party schools, such as the ones in Shanghai and Shenzhen, that are closely associated with the centre. In 2003, the centre also decided to establish and fully fund three completely new, high profile cadre academies (*ganbu xueyuan*, translated as “executive leadership academies”). The academies opened in 2005. They are located in Pudong, Shanghai, the place where the Party was founded in 1921, but also the emblem of China’s modernity, and the sacrosanct revolutionary sites of Jinggangshan (Mao’s first revolutionary base area in the early 1930s and the “cradle” of the party) and Yan’an (the revolutionary base area from where Mao launched the party’s revolutionary conquest of China). Together, these three sites offer a carefully constructed, material representation of the party’s auto-narrative on its own birth, growth and maturation.³ Both in the very choice of their location and their objectives these academies offer a curious blend of orthodox modernization, reinvented revolutionary tradition and foreign exposure. In close cooperation with the Central Party School and the National School of Administration, such education is supposed to complement conventional cadre training by educating cadres in the party’s revolutionary tradition and exercising party spirit. One of the key tasks of the academies is to offer “experiential education” (*tiyanshi jiaoyu*), experience with includes both the party’s revolutionary roots and its modernist future.⁴

³ “Hu Jintao wei san suo ganbu xueyuan jiancheng bing zhengshi kaixue fa hexin” (Congratulatory letter from Hu Jintao on the completion and formal start of study at the three cadre schools), 21 March 2005. Online at <http://www.jxgdw.com/news/gnxw/2005-03-21/3000036162.html>, checked 19 September 2006. A look at the innovation of cadre training from the three cadre academies (Cong san suo ganbu xueyuan kan ganbu jiaoyu peixun de chuangxin). Online at <http://www.jxgdw.com/news/gnxw/2005-03-21/3000036162.html>, checked 19 September 2006.

⁴ Central Party School, *Fully develop the role as main channel for training*. Report at the Tenth National Joint Conference on Cadre Education (*Dishi ci quanguo ganbu jiaoyu lianxi huiyi*), 2005. See also “Training classes at the three cadre academies innovate the model of training for party and state leading cadres” (*San suo ganbu xueyuan peixunban chuangxin dangzheng lingdao ganbu peixun moshi*), 4 August 2005. Online at <http://www.ytgdw.com/ytgdj/gjxw/2005-08-04/3000045761.html>, checked 19 September 2006.

Also in 2003, the State Council approved of the first Master of Public Administration program (MPA) in China to be taught jointly at the National School of Administration and Beijing University. Other MPA programs elsewhere have followed since.⁵ These initiatives were clearly designed to deliver the new kind of cadres that conventional party education and training had proven unable to produce, and took their cue explicitly from the educational programs offered at foreign business schools and schools of administration.⁶

The strengths attributed to the new MPA programs equally read as a comprehensive criticism of conventional cadre training. By drawing on foreign experience and China's specific circumstances, the MPAs will produce a new type of high-level managers, administrators and policy makers that possess practical, useful and specialized skills. The MPA programs will break through the conventional barriers between disciplines: their training can therefore be practical, comprehensive and strategic. Their flexible structure will allow students and their work units freedom to create a program of training tailored most to their needs. Teaching on the MPA programs will deploy a range of methods, including group discussion, simulation exercises, case analysis, site visits and social investigation. Finally, the MPAs will bring cadre training and study for a full degree together, and are a sign that cadre training is moving toward maturity and modernity.

The conventional programs of cadre education and training themselves were also directly targeted for reform. In October 2003, the Central Organization Department, the Central Propaganda Department and the Central Party School jointly issued the *Relevant opinions on further deepening the reform of cadre education in the Central Party School*.⁷ After party building was put at the centre of the political agenda by the Fourth Plenum of the Central Committee in 2004, the suggestions for reform contained in this document were quickly disseminated to provincial party schools across the nation.⁸ The Centre itself focused its

⁵ See Li Huipeng, "China's MPA education: an innovation in the model for the education and training of cadres", (Zhongguo MPA jiaoyu: ganbu jiaoyu peixun moshi de chuangxin), *Xuexi shibao* 18 October 2004, p.6. Online at http://www.studytimes.com.cn/txt/2004-10/19/content_5682610.htm, checked 18 September 2006.

⁶ Li Huipeng, China's MPA education.

⁷ *Relevant opinions on further deepening the reform of cadre education in the Central Party School* (Guanyu jin yi bu shenhua zhongyang dangxiao ganbu jiaoyu gaige de ruogan yijian). This document is not publicly available, but much of its content is cited in other sources, some of which have been referenced in the following sections.

⁸ See for instance Shi Taifeng, "Earnestly carry out the spirit of the Fourth Plenum of the Sixteenth Central Committee: further deepen the reform of the party school education – speech given at the discussion meeting on the reform of education in the national system of party schools" (Renzhen guanche luoshi dang de shiliu jie si zhongquanhui jingsheng, jin yi bu shenhua dangxiao jiaoxue gaige – zai quanguo dangxiao xitong jiaoxue gaige yantaohui shang de jianghua), 11 October 2004. Online at <http://www.ltdx.com/Article/Print.asp?ArticleID=397>, checked 18 September 2006. "Party schools from four cities discuss deepening educational reform" (Si zhixia shi dangxiao yantao shenhua jiaoxue gaige). Online at http://www.ccps.gov.cn/xinwen.jsp?daohang_name=%E6%90%9C%E7%B4%A2%E7%BB%93%E6%9E%9C&daohang_uri=search.jsp&content_uri=/root/jqyw/1113361568890, checked on 18 September 2006.

budgetary and capital construction spending on the three new cadre schools, the Central Party School, the National School of Administration, and, interestingly, web-based distance learning for rural party members. At both the central and provincial level, a period of experimentation, implementation and reflection followed, culminating in the Tenth National Joint Conference on Cadre Education (*Dishi ci quanguo ganbu jiaoyu lianxi huiyi*) in 2005.

Given the devolved nature of Chinese sub-national administration, each locality was still on its own to find the financial, human and organizational resources to follow the directives and opinions emanating from the centre. To understand what this meant for local party schools and schools of administration, and how they struggled to meet (and understand?) the new demands, it is perhaps best to turn to a report from one locality: Jiangjin city in Chongqing municipality.⁹

The Jiangjin report summarizes their work in 2004 and 2005 under three delightfully simple headings, namely “who teaches” (*shei lai jiao*), “what to teach” (*jiao shenme*), and “how to teach” (*zenme jiao*). The first mainly involves attracting external well-know teachers to give one-off lectures and, conversely, sending local Jiangjin teachers to schools in the developed coastal parts of China for re-training or further degree work. The second entails that in the design of the curriculum a special emphasis is placed on theory, applicability, innovation, practical issues, education, diversity, student participation, orientation on the future and strategy. For senior cadres this included adding to the curriculum classes that test cadres’ “psychological quality” and adaptability. Other classes are supposed to raise their civilization and decency or their vigilance. Yet others have as their subject the state of the municipality and strategic issues in the development of Jiangjin. For younger cadres, classes are organized in art appreciation, military training and shooting, music appreciation, calligraphy and debating. Finally, the third heading of “how to teach”, honestly starts with a crackdown on cadres who take leave from training whenever they please. A range of new teaching methodologies is then listed, including case analysis, discussion, lectures, debate, simulation, exercises, and exchange. More attention is also given to field trips and the use of audio-visual equipment in the classroom.

In Jiangjin city raising the “quality” of cadres seems have brought a fusion of the Leninist cadre, Renaissance man, Confucian gentleman and MBA graduate, leaving the impression of a confused, but no doubt rather interesting, cadre training pedagogy. However, this should not distract us from the seriousness of the reform efforts. The Centre itself certainly continues to be set on pushing its reform agenda further, also by trying to give more structure to the variety of local changes and experiments. To this aim, in March 2006 a new central document was promulgated, the *Trial regulations on cadre education and training work*,¹⁰ that breaks important new ground in the field of cadre training. The new *Trial regulations* contain much that is

⁹ Jiangjin party school deepens educational reform and raises the quality of training (Jiangjin shiwei dangxiao shenhua jiaoxue gaige tigao peixun zhiliang).

This report is part of a set of such local reports and reports from central organizations at the 2005 Tenth National Joint Conference on Cadre Education that were given to me. Several of these reports are available on the web, but that does not include this particular one.

¹⁰ *Regulations on cadre education and training work (trial)* (Ganbu jiaoyu peixun gongzuo tiaoli (shixing)). Online at <http://politics.people.com.cn/GB/1026/4250946.html> , checked 15 September 2006.

familiar, but perhaps even more that is not. Overall, the *Trail regulations* express the Centre's disquiet over the lack of fundamental change and formalize a development that was already well underway: the emergence of a market for many aspects of cadre training.

Obviously, the *Trial regulations* continue to emphasize the unique function of the party schools, schools of administration and the new central cadre schools. They continue to be the main providers of the conventional three-month long full-time training classes that leading cadres of county level and above at least once every five years have to attend. However, very importantly, their monopoly on this training is no longer unchallenged: for the first time it is also permitted that such training be given by other institutions that have been recognized by the responsible organization department or personnel bureau. Furthermore, it is recognized that beyond the ideological and theoretical foundation that such training provides, the requirements of the job for individual cadres may be very different, and cadre training should cater flexibly and effectively for these individual training needs in ways that party schools and schools of administration are ill-equipped to do.

Apart from the main element, the endorsement of "orderly competition" in cadre training, the *Trail regulations* also contain several other important new initiatives. In particular, cadre training should no longer just be a matter of going through the motions. Cadres should sit examinations or be otherwise assessed in the course of their training, including self-study. The department responsible for cadre training and the unit of individual cadres should each keep a file on the training of individual cadres. This file includes records of attendance and performance in training and will be used in the course of the annual assessment of a cadre's performance and the inspection before promotion or appointment. Lastly, strict warnings are sounded against certain excesses that have become apparent: the selling of degrees, tourism or other expensive activities taking place in the name of cadre training, and irregular practices in the recruitment of students.

Cadre education and training is a reform programme that continues to develop in a manner that is beginning to be more similar to other reforms, for instance those of state enterprises and public services. The endorsement of "orderly competition" gives market forces an important role right at the deepest core of Leninist governance: the party's grip over its own cadres. Clearly, this is not uncontentious, which explains why the centre at the same time spends increasingly large sums on the very institutions (party schools, cadre academies, schools of administration) whose monopoly is being challenged. We can only guess at the political machinations in Zhongnanhai that lie behind the complexities in this area, but in a way they matter less than what actually happens with cadre training in the field. The daily realities of cadre training are not simply determined by the policy pronouncements at the top. Like in many other areas of reform, local realities are in many ways quite often ahead of these and in fact function as an important driver of further reform policies.

3. Cadre training in the 2000s: the institutional framework

Cadre training involves a great many party and state institutions, whose efforts have to be coordinated. Although overall responsibility rests with the party central committee and state council, chief responsibility at the central level for cadre training is in the hands of the party's organization department, with the party's propaganda department, and the state's ministry of

personnel and the state commission for economy and trade responsible specific aspects. At the centre and sub-national levels of government, a cadre training leadership party small group is in charge of cadre training. The small group (sometimes called a committee) is headed by the deputy party secretary in charge of ideological work.¹¹ The group is administratively supported by the cadre training section of the party's organization department. The section is also responsible for communicating and implementing the plan. Although the leadership small group is responsible for deciding on the annual provincial cadre training plan, neither the formal head of the school of administration (a deputy head of government) nor the formal head of the school of socialism that trains non-CCP leading cadres (a deputy head of the People's Consultative Conference, see below) are even a member of this group. They are represented on the committee by the head of the Party's United Front Department, revealing how much cadre training is considered a party rather than a government affair. On the other hand, the head of the government's personnel department does have a seat on the committee, reflecting the department's role in managing the careers of non-leading cadres.¹²

Party schools and schools of administration are the main institutions responsible for implementing the annual cadre training plan at each level of administration, and we will discuss these in detail in the next sections. However, in the course of my fieldwork I discovered a seemingly never-ending range of other institutions and arrangements for cadre training and education, and further research would undoubtedly unearth yet more. First of all, "party branch schools" (*dangzhi xuexiao*) train cadres who work at a particular bureaucratic level and locality, but who are of insufficient rank to go to the real party school or school of administration. This includes the General Party Branch School (*Zongzhi Dangxiao*) at the centre. These schools are independent institutions, but tend to have close working relations with the full party school at their level.

Second, large state-owned enterprises or other very large state organizations likewise have their own party school that trains those cadres of the enterprise whose rank is too low to go to the party school or school of administration at the level and jurisdiction of the state that controls the enterprise.¹³ The head of one very large state enterprise in Yunnan who I met at a dinner party explained this in more detail to me. His enterprise with 40,000 employees has the rank of a prefecture or provincial bureau (*diqu/ting*), and last year the central government handed it over to Yunnan province. The company's main party school therefore has a rank one lower than the enterprise itself, i.e. county or prefectural office (*xian/chu*). Under the company's main school there are a further five party schools of county section or township (*ke/xiang*) rank. He added that the party schools in his company have in fact diversified into all kinds of more specialist

¹¹ Yunnan was exception in that regard. Until 2002 the full party secretary of the province chaired the cadre training committee. Field notes 18 November 2004.

¹² Field notes 18 November 2004 and the *2001-2005 national plan for cadre training*, pp. 13-14.

¹³ Like everything else that has to do with the state, state-owned enterprises are owned and controlled by the government of a particular area and of a particular level. A state enterprise somewhere in Yunnan may, for instance, be a provincial-level enterprise and thus be responsible to the provincial government of Yunnan. This enterprise will have no relationship with the township, county, or prefectural governments in whose area it is actually located: rank overrides geography.

professional training and education, and proper party training now is only a small part of its remit.¹⁴ I encountered the latter issue with at least one county-level party school as well, and I will return to this important issue later.

Third, many government cadres are actually not members of the Chinese Communist Party at all, but are either members of the eight so-called “democratic parties” (*minzhu dangpai*) or have no party membership at all (*feidang ganbu* or *dangwai ganbu*). The greater participation in government by non-party members is in fact actively promoted by the CCP that thus uses its time-honoured United Front strategy for the purposes of strengthening its role as China “ruling party” by broadening the base of its government in society. The ideological and theoretical training needs of such cadres are not catered for at the schools of administration or party schools, but at separate establishments known as “schools of socialism” (*shehui zhuyi xueyuan*). Schools of socialism exist separately at the national level and the provincial level (or that was at least the case in Yunnan), but at lower levels they have been combined with the party school/school of administration, thus creating an institution that simultaneously fulfils three functions and thus boasts three separate signs at its main gate. At all levels, the work of the schools of socialism is directed not by the democratic parties themselves, but by the CCP’s own United Front department, and is fully part of the annual cadre teaching plans drawn up by the local CCP’s cadre training committee.

Fourth, almost all departments of the party and the government have their own training centres (*ganbu peixun zhongxin*) or cadre schools (*ganbu xuexiao*) that are responsible for professional, non-political training of cadres of various levels in their organization. These courses usually last no longer than a week to ten days and have a very specific focus relevant to the work of a particular group of cadres. Of course, only departments above a certain size can afford to run such a centre. At lower levels, departments therefore have to turn to other training providers to run the courses that they need, and this quite often is the local party school or school of administration.¹⁵ However, which provider a department turns for its professional training to is, in principle at least, entirely up to them.

Part of the reason for the complexity of the general field of cadre training and education that I have briefly outlined above is historical. Traditionally, departments of government, functional units and state enterprises had a large degree of autonomy. Another part clearly is explained by the bureaucracy’s preoccupation with hierarchical rank and administrative jurisdiction: any particular school only caters for cadres of a particular rank and from a particular area. Lastly, as we have seen in an earlier section, the party attaches great importance to cadre training and education, and the numbers and variety of courses that have to be taught simply is astounding. Recent policy changes have deliberately created more diversity and competition, whilst also requiring governments to spend more money in this area.

¹⁴ Field notes 4 December 2004.

¹⁵ Field notes 29 October 2004. Courses that are provided on behalf of other departments are not part of a party school’s planned requirement. As we will see in a later section, courses “outside the plan” are an important source of extrabudgetary income that keeps many lower-level party schools afloat despite a static in-plan budget.

Despite this great variety, I have focussed my own research on cadre training at party schools and schools of administration, where the ideological and strategic connection between the party and its bureaucratic agents is forged most explicitly and directly. However, I will return to the issue of variety when discussing the promotion of competition in an emerging market for cadre training, which is clearly the direction that policy making in the last six year has gone.

4. Party schools and schools of administration

In cadre training, as in the administration in general, hierarchical rank is mapped onto levels of local government and spatial units. Geography, bureaucratic level and rank are conflated and one often serves as a shorthand reference to the others. The exact rank of the cadres trained at a particular school therefore depends on the administrative level of the school. Provincial schools, for instance, cater to cadres of full county/*chu* and deputy prefectural/*ting* rank, while prefectural schools teach full township/*ke* and deputy or full county/*chu* cadres. The Central Party School teaches at the prefectural/*ting* (or *ju*) and provincial/*bu* level, although a certain overlap exists. County level leading cadres, for instance, are trained at the provincial school if they hold direct executive responsibility. i.e. county party secretaries or county heads, and at the prefectural school if they hold less important posts such as the head of the people's congress or the joint consultative congress.

Even when limiting oneself to party schools and schools of administration (the equivalent of party schools for ranking non-leading cadres), cadre education and training is a complex enterprise. At each level, party schools and schools of administration deal with a range of short-term residential training courses, long-term residential degree courses and non-residential degree courses.

Main courses and other non-degree training courses

At party schools, a distinction is made between specialized professional training courses that are organized for a specific purpose (such as a new law or skills training in electronic government), short refresher courses, and general main courses. In addition, schools will, for a fee, take on the organization and teaching of other short-term training courses for other government departments or even enterprises that are not part of the school's own teaching plan. Examples of courses "outside the plan" (*jihuawai*) are induction courses for applicants for party membership from a particular department, or training courses for managers of a state enterprise. Usually, party schools secure contracts for these courses because of their relatively good facilities and, in some cases, also because they can provide specialist training in current policy and political developments in China and the West, further testifying to the broadly perceived usefulness of such subjects in China. However, one of my informants at the Yunnan Provincial Party School rather disarmingly admitted that the school was not very good at providing entertainment, an important aspect of such semi-commercial courses, although they were often praised for their expertise in promoting "team spirit."¹⁶

¹⁶ Interview Deng Bo, 24 November 2004. On party member induction courses, see interview with Tang, head of the Educational Affairs Office of the Qujing Party School, 17 November 2004.

Short-term main courses (*zhuti ban*) are the linear descendants of cadre training as it took place in party schools from the very beginning. Their main objective continues to be instilling knowledge of and conformity to the current ideological orthodoxy and administrative practice. Main courses are residential, last from one to three months and are a requirement for all leading and non-leading cadres. The exact rank of the cadres trained at a particular school depends on the administrative level of the school. Provincial schools, for instance, cater to cadres of full county/*chu* and deputy provincial/*ting* rank, while prefectural schools teach full township/*ke* and deputy county/*chu* cadres. In cadre training, as in the administration in general, hierarchical rank is mapped onto levels of local government and spatial units. Geography, bureaucratic level and rank are conflated and one often serves as a shorthand reference to the others.

Roughly two different types of main courses exist. The first type is called “novice training” (*churen peixun*), which is targeted at younger cadres who have been promoted to a higher rank. Participation in such a course is a requirement for appointment to their first position at that particular level. The other one is called “refresher training” (*lunxun*), which cadres are obliged to undergo every five years. Early on in my first stint of fieldwork, the head of education (*jiaoyu zhang*) and my main collaborator at the Yunnan provincial party school explained the difference as follows:

The first group often has just been recruited and has no experience in administration, but has a lot of theoretical knowledge from their time as undergraduate, masters, or even Ph.D. students. They need to be taught knowledge about administration that they didn’t get in university. The second group is different. They have substantial experience and need to know how to apply their knowledge to the handling of concrete issues. The main content of their training is the analysis and discussion of case studies with the objective to reach a consensus between teacher and students in the class. For instance, this morning I taught a class on administrative management. The main topic was how to move from an administration based on power to one based on service and the understanding of obligation. This is an important theme for the central government, as many leading cadres still operate on the basis that theirs is the final word (*wo shuo le suan*), whereas they have to work on the basis of the law and regulations, that is, they have to deal with issues on the basis of what the law says.¹⁷

One might expect that such main courses are taught on the basis of a strictly regimented curriculum, set at the centre and faithfully copied across China. In actual fact, quite the opposite is the case. Party schools are proud of their main courses and are given considerable leeway to teach them as they think best suits local conditions. The objective of main courses is not to teach a dead curriculum or to prepare students for examination, but better to prepare cadres to carry out their job in a way that conforms to central priorities. Cadres are leaders of important organizations, and the party in its training recognizes that they therefore have to be trusted with very considerable freedom. Traditionally, Leninist democratic centralism and Maoist strategy gave party cells and army units the autonomy to carry out their tasks as they thought best suited the circumstances. This spirit is clearly still alive in the relationship of the party with its cadres:

¹⁷ Field notes 2 April 2004.

the centre only establishes and imposes the principles that all have to abide by; it does not want to micromanage its most trusted personnel or confine them to a Foucauldian panopticum.

The contents of what is taught in short-term training classes can best be described as a hybrid that reflects the ambiguities and contradictions of the Chinese administration and indeed society at large. Both general political content and more applied aspects of the curriculum are infused with the need to explain and impose orthodoxy and uniformity. General ideology therefore includes what one might expect: Marxism/Leninism/Mao Zedong thought, Deng Xiaoping theory and of course the “Three Represents”, with a clear shift away from old orthodoxy to new elaborations. Classes quite often start with the assertion that the older theories still have some validity although they cannot explain or guide everything that is happening now. Apart from changes and updates of orthodoxy, other content is much more recognizable to someone working in a university outside China. There is for instance a very heavy emphasis on law. Law is a rapidly expanding instrument of rule that imposes a uniform mould of rules that everybody has to play by. As was already explained by the head of education in Yunnan, the emphasis on law rather than simple ideological orthodoxy is in fact a key instrument to restrain the use and abuse of power by officials, not only to fight corruption, but also, and more importantly, to make cadres more of an instrument of the political decisions made at higher levels rather than political decision makers themselves.

Another discursive formation that administration and by extension cadre training taps into is “social science”, or, to borrow and phrase much favoured by the British Labour Party, “evidence-based policy.” Many classes spend considerable time on presenting and explaining the findings of research conducted by the teacher or others, and elaborating how this research can be relevant to administration. Obviously, there is considerable self-censorship here and clear boundaries that one cannot pass, but teachers, particularly older and more respected one, often do not shy away from pointing out some of the real problems highlighted by research caused by inadequate or non-existing policy.

Nevertheless, many lectures are usually predictable expansions on new legislation, policy priorities and new slogans. The ample use of Powerpoint presentations often only helps teachers in simply reading out a fully prepared lecture. However, lecturers who simply regurgitate existing legislation, policy or ideology are criticized by students as a waste of time. Good lecturers also draw extensively on their own research or experience, particularly where lectures are about implementation or experiences with current policy priorities. Nevertheless, teachers comment on the difficulty of establishing credibility with their students, who are often of the same age or older, and have extensive practical experience rather than the book knowledge of teachers, particularly the younger ones. Students, in turn, often find it difficult to see how the general knowledge of teachers can be relevant to their work.

Degree courses

To party schools and schools of administration, the short term residential courses are their main task, and they in fact expect that they will gradually be made to concentrate more fully on these again as other tasks will either become less onerous, or be taken over by other, specialized training institutions that the recent policy changes are encouraging.

By referring to the short-term residential training courses as “main courses” (*zhuti ban*), they are distinguished from residential and non-residential “degree courses” (*xueli ban*). The latter are colloquially often called sidelines (*fuye*),¹⁸ a term used in agriculture to distinguish grain production (main crops, *zhuye*) from other crops such as vegetables. This of course is a direct reference to Maoist agricultural policy. Sideline production then was politically suspect: very profitable perhaps, but also a capitalist distraction from grain, the mainstay of socialist production. Degree study (and especially the non-residential courses, see below) are very similar to that: they raise most of the income for the school, are good for the vast majority of students, and occupy much of the time of the staff, yet are not considered core business.

Degree courses are taught simply and only to prepare students for examinations, and do not aspire to the ideological and political goals that lie at the core of main courses. As one of my informants put it: “non-residential degree education teaches for degrees, cadre training is education for the quality of cadres.”¹⁹ As the sole purpose of instruction, examinations are taken incredibly seriously. In order to avoid any leak of the content of the examinations, the teachers who set the examination are held in full detention (*fengbi*) from when they get together to set the papers right up until the end of the examinations in a separate office building on campus to avoid they reveal the contents of the papers. The papers themselves are also put under lock and key. In this period they are not allowed to have any contact with the world outside: no telephones, mobile reception is screened off, food is provided by cooks who silently hand their meal to them through a hole in the door. If they have to have contact with the outside, several people stand around to listen in, including a person of the discipline inspection department of the party.²⁰ The downside of the exam-driven nature of the courses is, as teachers regularly complain, that students on degree courses tend to be very uncritical and not interested in discussion, which is very different from the students on the short term “main courses.”

Degree courses originate in the early 1980s, when the massive drive to raise the educational standards of China’s cadre corps of the early reforms suddenly required millions of cadres to obtain the minimum degree deemed necessary for the level of job they were in. In fact, there are two quite different types of degree courses. At the Yunnan provincial party school, a small number of classes continued to be taught full-time (*tuochan*, i.e. the student temporary having left their job), although their numbers are much lower now than there were in the 1990s. These courses are one or two years in length and at the provincial level maximally lead to a Master’s level degree certificate of the provincial school itself. Many of these courses were in fact targeted at minority students, and were part of Yunnan’s continued drive to nurture an indigenous cadre corps for minority areas. To this aim, both admissions criteria and examination standards were set at lower levels than for non-minority degree programmes. While the main focus of these programmes is on substantive coursework needed for the degree, ideological training is a subsidiary, but important part as well.

¹⁸ Field notes 17 November 2004.

¹⁹ Field notes 18 November 2004. This informant was actually specifically referring to so called “correspondence courses” that make up the bulk of degree course teaching.

²⁰ Field notes 11 April 2004.

However, the vast majority of degree students at the Yunnan party school were taught by correspondence (*hanshou*) through the school's department of continuing education, whose main offices and teaching facilities were at a different site in the centre of Kunming. Correspondence courses prepare for a range of degrees, from middle vocational school (*zhongzhuan*) all the way up to masters degrees. Degrees can be taken in many subjects, but the most popular ones were economic management, law and public management. Students are recruited by open examinations that take place at the party school's main site, and prospective students as a rule have extensively prepped in tutorial classes organized by the school, through the Internet, or self-study.

The term correspondence course actually does not adequately describe their pedagogy or institutional setup, which is why they are often also referred to as "education while in active service" (*zaizhi jiaoyu*). As this term suggests, students continue in their normal day-time job. During most of the time they do indeed study on their own and are guided through assignments and correspondence with their teachers. However, there is also a requirement to spend a fixed number of days per year in class, and employers (as a rule, a state organization) are obliged to give the students adequate time off to do so.

Degree courses are entirely taught on basis of set materials and fixed requirements. Students study and take the classes purely to prepare for the exam. Only higher education institutions recognized by the national or provincial degree committee have the right to confer full academic degrees, called *xuewei* in Chinese, and these do not include party schools and schools of administration, except for the Central Party School in Beijing. However, as we saw in an earlier section, the central and provincial party schools since the 1980s have given out large numbers of degrees, called *xueli*, that are not recognized by a degree committee, but are good enough to fulfil the educational requirements for employment in the state sector. It is this right to confer *xueli* degrees that provides the regulatory basis for the thriving distance learning operation of the Yunnan Party School.

However, the situation in actual fact is not as straightforward as this. The central and provincial party schools may hold on to the profitable right to give out *xueli* degrees, but they do not have (or probably would not want to have) the capacity to teach the tens of thousand of students that sign up for their courses every year, all across the country in the case of the central school and across Yunnan in the case of the provincial school. It is here that the full hierarchy of party schools kicks in. Party schools at the prefectural level and below do not have any independent right to confer degrees, but nevertheless provide the bulk of the teaching, both by correspondence and class based. Entrance and final examinations are set by the degree-giving school. The entire curriculum and teaching materials are likewise designed and provided by that school. Lower-level schools have entered in agreements with specific degree giving schools to teach the students according to these standards for a specific share in the income.²¹ They are responsible for supplying teachers of the required standards, classrooms, time tabling and

²¹ At one prefectural school that I visited, in the case of degrees from the Central Party School 40 per cent of fee income went to the central school, 20 percent to the provincial party school and the remaining 40 per cent to the prefectural school. In the case of a degree from the provincial school, 40 per cent is for the provincial school and 60 per cent for the prefectural school.

everything else that is needed. In fact, a prefectural school may in turn farm out to their subordinate county level schools much of the teaching for degree courses they have agreed to teach.²²

Lower-level party schools as a rule teach degree courses for several higher level schools at once. Students in one classroom may then for instance take the more expensive and prestigious Central Party School degree in, say, public administration, while students in the next classroom are taught on the basis of a different curriculum for the same degree given out by the provincial school. In fact, the range of degrees offered at local schools was even greater than that. The 2000 *Decision on the strengthening and improvement of party school work in the 21st century*²³ encouraged party schools to seek *xuewei* certification for their degrees. At the time of my fieldwork that hadn't yet happened, but many local party schools had started teaching courses certified by the university extension departments of regular local universities, thereby enabling local students to obtain real *xuewei* degrees that have greater currency in the job market outside the narrow confines of the state sector. Moreover, both the *xueli* and *xuewei* degrees taught at county and prefectural party schools included a wide range of subjects far beyond the traditional remit of party schools (including finance, management, accountancy IT, economics) that attracted not only government cadres, but also students from many other backgrounds.²⁴

Courses for *xueli* and increasingly *xuewei* degrees have created an active market in higher education that party schools are operating very actively in. Schools that have the right to give out degrees have used this resource to guarantee a steady income stream. Schools without this right have capitalized on other resources: their teaching staff, buildings and, most importantly, proximity to students. The market has created a system that actually works remarkably well: it brings degree education within reach of hundreds of thousand of students across China, fulfils the party-state's ambition to raise the educational level of its staff, and has created a substantial and reliable income stream for party schools across the country, keeping them afloat despite very restricted local budgets.

The massive scale and increasing marketization of degree course work also had another effect. As we have seen in the previous section, since 2000 central policy emphasizes the importance of high-quality teaching staff as one of the ways to raise the overall level of cadre education. Although this has had the effect of much stricter standards in the appointment, appraisal and promotion of academic staff in party schools, it has also created a very active, secondary market in teachers. This especially seems to be true for degree courses that put a very considerable strain on existing human resources and at the same time generate the cash to pay for outside teachers. Schools at all levels recruit well-known (or not so well known) teachers for specialist sessions or subjects. Nationally, famous scholars fly about the country giving special lectures at provincial schools. In each province, small prefectural or county schools recruit teachers from higher level schools, or from universities in the area. Sometimes, this happens as "support" as part of the

²² Field notes 17 November 2004.

²³ "Decision on the strengthening and improvement of party school work in the 21st century" (Ershi'er shiji jiaqiang he gaijin dangxiao gongzuo de jue ding), 5 June 2000, online at <http://aixin.njmu.edu.cn/jcdj/xxcl/200603/5948.html>, checked 14 June 2006.

²⁴ Field notes 22 April 2004 and 4 December 2004.

“work guidance relationship” (*yewu zhidao guanxi*) that exists between party schools of different levels, and payment is quite modest and nominally voluntary (several teachers mentioned a sum of around 100 yuan per session at the time of fieldwork). However, outside of these relationships, the arrangement is entirely private. Payment in those cases can be considerably higher and on the basis of norms set by the home institution of the teacher. Such fees can be an important supplement to the still rather meagre wages of university teaching staff.²⁵

Xueli degree teaching by correspondence has proven to be a cost-effective and very rapid way to raise the educational standard of Chinese cadres across the country. In addition, smaller numbers of cadres received their *xueli* degrees by full-time or part-time on-site study at party schools. However, this is an increasingly unpopular option: obtaining a mere *xueli* degree from a provincial school does not justify the career time and earned income that have to be sacrificed, and for the overwhelming majority of cadres taking a correspondence course is much more sensible.

For many provincial and lower level schools, correspondence courses have been a financial lifeline that allowed them to continue operating. For local cadres, especially in rural areas and the less developed parts of China, correspondence degrees were often the only way to overcome the disadvantages of their background and earn a chance of promotion. This led to a proliferation of degree courses across party schools that has been criticized on a number of grounds. Despite a fixed curriculum and a tight control over the examinations, the quality of correspondence degrees is often deemed to be unacceptably low, and in some cases degrees are even corruptly for sale.²⁶

Concerns over the quality of correspondence courses were voiced explicitly in the landmark 2000 *Decision on the strengthening and improvement of party school work in the 21st century*. In fact, concerns about correspondence courses ran so deep that a special policy document regarding the Central Party School’s operation was issued in 2001, the *Programme for educational reform in the Correspondence Academy of the Central Party School*.²⁷ This document specifies the problems exist with the uniformity of quality of correspondence

²⁵ Field notes 18 November 2004.

²⁶ Corruption of this nature at the Hainan Provincial Party School became public in 2004, where mere serious inflation of degree requirements had given way to outright sale of degree certificates. On Hainan’s “diploma wholesale shop” (*wenping pifa dian*), see “Hainan dangxiao lanfa wenping diaocha: weigui ban ban shouru 1600 wan yuan” (Investigation in the reckless issuing on diplomas by the Hainan Party School: 16 million yuan income from organizing classes in violation of the regulations), transcript from TV broadcast “economic half hour” on the CCTV economy channel, no date, online at <http://news.sohu.com/2004/07/02/14/news220831461.shtml>, 2 July 2004, checked 21 March 2007; Huang Yong, “Hainan dangxiao ‘pifa’ wenping” (Hainan Party School sell diplomas “wholesale”), *Zhongguo qingnian bao* 16 June 2004, online at http://www.gmw.cn/01wzb/2004-06/20/content_45710.htm, 20 June 2004, checked 21 March 2007.

²⁷ *Zhonggong Zhongyang Dangxiao Hanshou Xueyuan jiaoyu gaige gangyao*, issued on 23 November 2001; reprinted in *2002 Zhonggong Zhongyang Dangxiao hanshou jiaoyu nianjian* (Yearbook of correspondence education of the Central Party School), Beijing Zhonggong Zhongyang Danxiao Chubanshe, 2003, pp. 10-12.

education across the nation, including examination standards and the quality of teaching. The document details a range of measures, such as setting up a nation-wide quality control system, improvement in teacher training and certification, the creation of a credit point system to allow for greater student choice, tightening of the examination system and a greater use of distance learning methods. Implicitly, concern is also expressed at the examination-driven nature of the courses. The programme insists that education in party spirit should be a mandatory course on every degree programme. Correspondence education too is party school education and should be a way to improve the work style of the party, the administration and cadres: in other words, correspondence education ought to be an instrument in eradicating the widespread evils of corruption, power abuse and lack of ideological or moral awareness.

In a sense, the unease over correspondence education is just one aspect of the rift that has opened up between the Centre and developed areas on the one hand and the less developed parts of China on the other. From the perspective of the centre and the developed coastal provinces, correspondence education was a mid-1980s Dengist measure to rid the administration of leftist stalwarts and to bootstrap the cadre system into the modern era. However, ten or fifteen years on, the administration in these areas recruited almost all its new cadres directly from among university graduates and no longer needed basic degree education offered by sub-standard party schools. In as far as their cadres needed more education, this ought be masters degrees or even PhDs that were fully competitive in the labour market. In other words, cadres should have the opportunity to obtain real *xuewei* degrees, either from regular universities or from other recognized establishments for higher education.

The impatience with the lack in quality of *xueli* degrees came to the fore in the 2000 *Decision on the strengthening and improvement of party school work in the 21st century* that encouraged party schools to seek the right to confer *xuewei* degrees. At the Yunnan Provincial Party School, as no doubt other provincial schools, administrators expressed the ambition to gain this right, but also admitted to doubt that this would be a realistic option, especially because the academic standing of their teaching staff simply was not yet up to it, despite efforts to raise the quality of their research. Both correspondence courses and on-site courses continued to teach for *xueli* degrees, for which, in Yunnan at least, there still was considerable demand: in 2004, only less than half of leading and ordinary cadres in Yunnan had a university degree.²⁸ In Qujing prefecture, for instance, although demand for undergraduate or vocational *xueli* degrees among leading cadres had dropped considerably in recent years, the demand among ordinary cadres, including non-leading civil servant and employees in enterprises and public services organizations, was still considerable.²⁹

However, at the Centre the ambition to phase out *xueli* degrees continues to exist. When I interviewed administrators at the Central Party School's Correspondence Academy in December 2006, I was quite surprised to learn that most of the Academy's correspondence degree teaching would be discontinued. In the developed coastal areas, I was told, there is little demand now for basic higher vocational and even undergraduate degrees and these programmes will no longer be offered. In addition, regular universities now offer more and more degree programmes

²⁸ Interview Duan Eryu, 12 December 2004.

²⁹ Group interview with the leadership of Qujing Prefecture Party School, 16 November 2004.

specifically targeted at cadres, often in collaboration with local party schools, a development, as mentioned earlier, that I also witnessed in Yunnan. Instead, the correspondence academy will concentrate on Masters degrees, for which there still is considerable demand due to the competition between cadres for opportunities for promotion.

Instead of degree work, the central correspondence academy will focus its efforts more on contributing to non-degree cadre training, using its expertise in distance learning and its existing extensive contacts with high-quality lecturers available in Beijing. Using direct satellite or Internet links, the Academy could in principle organize “lectures for the whole party” (*quandang jiangke*) by high leaders or scholars here in Beijing. Such “Internet Marxism” (*Yintewang Makesi zhuyi*) could be added to the normal training programmes at local party schools. “Internet Marxism” is part of what is called the “transformational development” (*zhuanxing fazhan*) of party schools and cadre training in which higher degree work and “on-the-job training” (*gangweishang peixun*) have priority.³⁰

Like other elements of the transformational development, the effort to get rid of *xueli degrees* and the development of “Internet Marxism” is driven by a strongly centralist and elitist agenda. Local party schools, especially those in the less well-off parts of the country, are considered to be not fully equipped to deal with the demands of China’s increasingly sophisticated cadre corps. As in other policy areas, the reaction of the Centre has been to bypass local governmental institutions and direct matters directly from the Centre. This agenda originates at least in part at the Central Party School itself that very early on already had gained the right to confer *xuewei* degrees, in addition to its other task to train high-level non-degree cadre courses. Moreover, the Central Party School receives generous funding from the central government and thus does not have to rely on teaching correspondence *xueli* degrees for financial survival, despite, as we have seen, that this continued to be a very large and profitable operation.

The Central Party School is an institution that is in many respects much more akin to regular research universities. Its academic staff of about 400 is on an equal footing with academics in top-flight universities in China. In fact, academic staff at the Central Party School has the luxury of focusing exclusively on masters and PhD education: in 2006, the school had 600 masters and 300 PhD students and was building a new student dormitory that would accommodate 1,000 more students.³¹ This makes the school one of the elite graduate centres in the country: after graduation many find employment in regular universities, specialist research or teaching institutions, or in government.

In addition to full-time students in residence, the Central Party School has also established recognized *xuewei* “degree centres” (*xuewei dian*) in local party schools in Tianjin and Shanghai. These degree centres teach three-year part-time Central Party School masters degrees. Teachers from the central school teach at these centres during weekends. Students are local cadres, usually of county/office rank or higher, and their number is much larger than that of full-time students at

³⁰ Interviews Ou Yaping and Shi Shipeng, 21 December 2006.

³¹ Interview Zhao Huji, 20 December 2006.

the school in Beijing itself: in political science alone, in 2006 there were at least 400-500 part-time students.³²

It is not clear whether the phasing out of Central Party School correspondence teaching and the new *xuewei* degree centres are what the authors of the 2000 *Decision on the strengthening and improvement of party school work in the 21st century* had in mind when they encouraged party schools to seek the right to confer *xuewei* degrees. What they do amount to, however, is the gradual spread of *xuewei* education aimed at the needs of China's new stratum of well-educated and ambitious younger cadres in selected (and most highly developed) parts of China. Meanwhile, in other areas not even the second-rate *xueli* correspondence degrees from the central school are on offer anymore, and all that remains there are third-rate degrees from the correspondence academies of local party schools.

Clearly, this development will not only help raise the educational level and quality of China's new cadre corps, but also threatens to deepen the rift between the more and less developed parts of China. However, local initiative seems at least in part to bridge this gap. Several local party schools (including the Provincial Party School) that I visited had found ways to offer *xuewei* degrees that did not depend on the Central Party School's magnanimity. In Yunnan, at any rate, party schools started teaching courses certified by for instance the university extension departments of regular universities, in some cases thereby enabling local students to obtain real *xuewei* degrees.³³ For instance, the Yunnan Provincial Party School had set up modest collaborative masters programmes with the National Minorities University in Beijing and the Macao Technological University. The highly entrepreneurial party school of Qilin urban district in eastern Yunnan, to which we shall return later, had joined up with Yunnan Normal University. Although the degrees under this programme were still *xueli* degrees the degree certificate had the seal of both the provincial committee for cadre education and training and Yunnan Normal University.³⁴ In Shilin county, the party school already since the early 1990s offered higher vocational degree classes in collaboration with the Central Radio and Television University. More recently, the school had set up undergraduate and masters *xuewei* degree classes with Yunnan University.³⁵

The growth of *xuewei* degree teaching in local party schools shows that here too the forces of the market are at play that earlier created the thriving market in *xueli* education. It is unclear how much of this is a planned development or just merely tolerated. More importantly, it does seem unlikely that such local initiative will be able fully to make up for the centralization of control over degree work that is inherent in the central party school's strategy of very selectively opening degree centres. The local programmes that I heard about in Yunnan only take a few dozen students at best. This, coupled with the discontinuation of Central Party School

³² Interview Zhao Huji, 20 December 2006.

³³ When I mentioned this practice to academics or administrators in Beijing, they refused to believe that such a thing was happening, because it was against the regulations to do so without the prior approval of the national degree committee.

³⁴ Meeting with the leadership of the Qilin District Party School, 18 November 2004.

³⁵ Interview with Huang, Head of the Shilin County Party School, 28 November 2004.

correspondence degree teaching, will make it only harder for China less developed regions to build up an administrative infrastructure that passes muster with the centre.

5. A geography of power: exchanges, models and advanced experiences

One of the most striking aspects of cadre training and education is how much it is suffused with a discourse on (if not obsession with) modernity. At the most general level, this takes the familiar form that bureaucratic and non-bureaucratic actors alike subscribe to an unchallengeable belief that China should progress from a state of backwardness and weakness to one of strength and modernity. Of course, the reforms also buy off political discontent with the material fulfilment of the consumerism of middle class life, but the reforms have delivered, or promise to deliver, the completion of China as a modern nation – strong, unified and prosperous – that will at last right all the wrongs that China suffered in the course of 150 years of humiliation since the Opium War in 1840.

What makes this discourse on modernization very compelling to almost all Chinese is that differences in modernity also imply and justify inequalities in status and power: the discourse on modernity not only liberates, but also locks its subjects into a hierarchy. It is here that the concept of “quality” (*suzhi*), which has recently been written about so much in range of different contexts, comes in. “Quality”, as the measure of modernity, provides a convenient cognitive shorthand that reduces a range of dimensions of inequality (power, location, bureaucratic status, education, and civilization to name only the most common ones) and issues (for instance environmental pollution, water shortage, disease, poverty, corruption, illiteracy, infanticide, migration) to just one variable. This not only has the advantage of simplicity, but also puts the blame for backwardness squarely on the poor and downtrodden rather than the structural factors that produce and reproduce inequality and exploitation. This in turn points to a clear and unambiguous course of action. In order to solve China’s problems, the quality of its population quite simply has to be improved. That, in turn, can only be done by modernizing each and every aspect of China’s troubled society and culture. Obviously, this modernizing will have to be done by those who are already the most modern, who in turn must be those people and institutions that are the most powerful, most centrally located, best educated and most civilized, and have the highest status.

The hierarchical nature of the Chinese concept of modernization entails that modernity is always elsewhere: modernization means trying to improve one’s place on the ladder of modernity by trying to become like other, more modern places, people, institutions, or nations. As one of the party’s main modernization strategies, this has had direct implications for cadre education and training as well.

We already have seen that bureaucratic rank, level and jurisdiction are inseparable from the world of cadre training. High-level school administrators frequently meet at central locations at which cadre training within for instance a province or the nation as a whole is coordinated. Party schools and other institutions for cadre training train cadres of a particular rank and within the jurisdiction of the administration that they are part of. Typically, cadres receive training at a school or centre one level higher than their own. Training itself thereby strongly reinforces both the vertical lines of authority within the bureaucracy and the boundaries of the jurisdiction of a

particular level of administration. By gathering its subordinate cadres at a central location for training, the administration at a particular level reinforces the fact that, ultimately, these cadres belong to and are supposed to be loyal to that administration and not to the locality or institution that they happen to be working in.

Party schools are thus important centres in their jurisdiction of what I would like to call the party's administrative civilizing project: a combination of advanced knowledge, ideological discipline, normative and moral guidance and access to the power, wishes and desires of the leadership of the administration that one belongs to. This role of party schools extends beyond the training and education they provide, or the research that staff at party schools conduct for local administrative bodies. Teachers, particularly the older and more respected ones, often get asked informally on their opinion, advice, or assistance to help sort out problems that former students run into.

A student of mine became party secretary at a rural township. Villagers at either side of the border between two counties had a conflict over water, and this student asked me how to handle this. I suggested that he handle the issue according to the law. He checked the autonomous regulation but could not find a legal basis to solve the problem, but in the end found a legal basis in China's water law, which said that only counties can set up agreements on water resources. The agreement between the two villages therefore had no legal basis. This voided that agreement and also solved the problem.³⁶

Personal student-teacher relationships forged at the party school knit together the community of cadres working within the jurisdiction of the administration that the school is part of. Furthermore, a significant number of students at party schools are in fact part of the party's so-called "theoretical backbone" (*lilun guban*) that includes teachers and staff at lower level party schools.³⁷ Teacher-student relationships at party school therefore also informally weld together the system of lower-level party schools within an administrative area, relationships that are often more important than formal bureaucratic "guidance" (*zhidao*).

The relationship between school teachers and practical administration is also reinforced at a more formal level. Party schools are sensitive to the problem that their teaching has insufficient bearing on the realities of cadres' day-to-day work, and require from their teaching staff that they serve an extended period of time in the field in a non-executive appointment in a local government or other administrative agency. This practice, called "linked positions" (*guazhi*), not only teaches teachers a things they would otherwise never learn – "to connect theory and practice" as it is often put in Marxist terms – but also creates relationships and loyalties with that locality and its cadres that often last an entire career. This applies particularly to younger teachers who often have been recruited straight out of college. Older teachers often have considerable prior administrative experience without the need for any "linked positions", but likewise maintain their relationships with places of previous employment.

³⁶ Interview Jiang Yulin, 2 April 2004.

³⁷ Training theoretical backbone cadres (including those working in the propaganda apparatus) is routinely mentioned in policy documents as one of core tasks of party schools, particularly those at the central and provincial level.

However, the flow of information, students and personnel is only partially conditioned by relatively straightforward vertical bureaucratic links and the network of social relationships that these create. One of the first things that struck me when I started my research was that cadre training involves a great deal of movement. Indeed, the very efficacy of training seems to be predicated on travel or temporary residence elsewhere, which is why all institutes involved in training have ample facilities for lodging large numbers of often very demanding students. Such travel goes far beyond what is needed to receive normal training at the school in one's jurisdiction. Both students and teachers commonly travel far and wide to party schools, universities, academies and other institutions across the country and indeed abroad.

Teachers at the Yunnan provincial party school, for instance, could apply for sabbatical leave of a semester or a year, which they typically would try to spend at a famous university, often in Beijing, for instance the Central Party School, the National School of Administration, Peking University, Tsinghua University, or the Central School of Nationalities. These sojourns were not arranged through vertical administrative relations, but by individual agreement. Conversely, as we saw in the previous section, well-known teachers from higher level institutions frequently give guest lectures or even teach whole classes at lower level institutions.

Such academic travel is predicated on the notion that superior and more modern knowledge is hierarchically and spatially distributed, a hierarchy that very specifically also extends to the developed nations, with the US at its apex. In the words of an experienced teacher at the Yunnan Party School:

Question: Do teachers have the opportunity for further training?

Answer: Yes, they do, for instance they can go to another university for further study or as visiting scholars. Normally, they go to Fudan University in Shanghai, or the Central Party School or National School of Administration in Beijing and such like. Their training there lasts a few months, half a year, or at the most a full year.

Question: What exactly do they do there?

Answer: For instance, they listen to lectures of high level professors, serve as assistants to professors with the right to supervise Ph.D. students, and join their research projects. One of the teachers at our school is a visiting scholar at the National School of Administration. He studies with a teacher who has studied in the United States, and serves as his assistant. We do not have any teachers who have been sent abroad for study, but we have made short-term study tours, mainly to Europe, Australia and to neighbouring countries of Yunnan.³⁸

Clearly, the Yunnan provincial party school does not, as yet, have the academic stature to forge direct relationships with the US, and has to limit its aspirations to national schools and to Southeast Asia, Europe and Australia. For instance, the school has an ongoing relationship with Macau Technological University that brings teachers from Macau to the school, while students

³⁸ Interview Jiang Yulin, 2 April 2004.

here can take a degree in Macau, although their instruction takes place at the school in Kunming except the final oral examination.³⁹

Most importantly, the spatial imaginary of modernity, administrative civilization and academic excellence has spawned an incredible range and density of exchanges, off-site training courses and study tours, and, as more funds are poured into cadre training, each year brings yet more. The Yunnan Provincial Party School, for instance, routinely sends groups of its students to other party schools for short-term courses coupled with inspection tours of local enterprises and other examples of desirable development. Some of these visits are free of charge as part of mandatory support provided by developed areas to developing areas, other fall outside the assistance plan and have to be paid for.⁴⁰ Similar arrangements exist at even lower levels of the administrative ladder: Yiliang county in Yunnan sent 400 cadres to Shanghai in 2004 and already in 1992 had started sending individual cadres to Guangdong province for temporary non-executive appointments (*guazhi*).⁴¹ According to the head of Educational Affairs of the party school in Qujing prefecture in eastern Yunnan:

After full-time study on the training course here has been completed, students go on an inspection tour for half a month to places like Zhejiang, Shanghai, Guangzhou, or Shenzhen, mainly for inspection and to attend classes. After class, students visit enterprises and villages. The students' expenses are borne by their work unit, while those of the teachers from here who accompany them are paid for by our school. Our teachers also have to pay fees for sitting in on the lectures. Two years ago we went to Shenzhen, and we had requested lectures from eight teachers from the Shenzhen City Party School, four on theoretical knowledge and four on enterprise management. Finally, there was one week when the students carried out party spirit analysis. The students wrote their own summary of their experiences that were discussed in their group. After that followed an exchange of views for the whole class attended by leaders of our school and leaders of the Organization Department here.⁴²

Significantly, the party schools that students are most frequently sent to are not located in the nation's administrative centre Beijing, but in the areas where China's market-driven economic reforms have progressed the farthest: Shanghai, Zhejiang and Shenzhen. Schools in these places cater for large numbers of such students from all over China's less developed areas, an arrangement which, one would imagine, is also a significant source of income quite apart from the possible gratification that comes with the confirmation of being one of the centre's of China's administrative civilization. In Shanghai, these students are kept separate from the normal student-cadres and are reportedly looked down upon, in time-honoured Shanghainese fashion, as poor country bumpkins (Tran 2003). Regular universities, too, have entered the market for cadre training. Particularly the more prestigious universities in Beijing (Tsinghua University, Peking University and Renmin University) offer a very extensive range of training courses to cadres

³⁹ Interview Huang Xin 16 April 2004.

⁴⁰ Interview Duan Eryu, 12 December 2004.

⁴¹ Group interview with the leadership of Yiliang County Party School, 27 November 2004.

⁴² Interview with Teng, one of the heads the Qujing prefectural party school educational affairs office, 18 November 2004.

from all across the country and from all kinds of government departments. This “high-end training” (*gaoduan peixun*) aspires to tap into the most advanced knowledge that China has to offer without much (if any) concern for ideology. As this trends deepens, cadre training therefore will become increasingly specialized: party schools will provide ideological training to reinforce the Leninist loyalty of cadres, while specialized training off-site courses (and the exchange programmes to be discussed below) cater for academic and professional content intent on turning cadres into competent technocratic managers.

Almost all party schools also regularly send inspection delegations to foreign countries. The Yunnan Provincial Party School, for instance, sent delegations first to Australia and more recently to four western European countries. However, more important is the growth in the number and visibility of training programmes that partially or wholly take place at a foreign university or other institutions, such as schools of government. The best know (at least in China) and possibly the earliest of these involved the Central Party School and the Kennedy School of government at Harvard University. From the early 2000s onward, this programme enabled selected younger county-level cadres to spend half a year at Harvard in a programme specifically tailored to their needs after a period of preparatory training in Beijing. The success of this programme has spawned several other programmes of this kind in countries such as the US, Canada, France, Sweden and the UK.

As a rule, international cadre training programmes are not run by party schools themselves, but by a provincial or national government as part of their cadre education and training programmes. Competition for places on such a programme is quite often very keen, not only for the opportunity to travel abroad (about which Chinese cadres take an increasingly jaded view), but also for what it will do for one’s future career prospects. The establishment of these programmes has been much facilitated by the enthusiasm of international organizations, foreign governments and foreign universities. Particularly in the case of national programmes, most, if not all, of the funding often comes from foreign donors or partners, who see these programmes as an opportunity to have an impact on the modernization of China’s administration and the new generation of Chinese leaders, and to establish invaluable personal and institutional relationships with the Chinese government. However, programmes for provincial governments in China are often mainly taken on for the income that it generates, and students are as a rule trained entirely separately from regular students. Chinese cadres who come to a famous university in a developed country in the West are therefore treated in a very similar fashion as cadres who have been sent on a training programme at a party school in for instance Shanghai or Shenzhen in China itself.

Both domestic and international programmes are part of the general strategy of marketizing and increasing the number of institutions and ways to deliver cadre training. Such programmes are part of the cadre education and training plans of all governments in China. They should not be interpreted as in any way a loosening of the grip of a government or party committee on the cadres within its jurisdiction. However, several recent policy initiatives in the use of off-site training programmes have actually strengthened the grip of the Centre arguably at the expense of local administrations. Examples are the decision to train selected county party secretaries centrally at the Central Party School in the course of the tenth five-year plan (2001-2005) and, even more ambitiously, the establishment of the three new cadre academies in Shanghai,

Jinggangshan and Yan'an. The latter are of course especially intriguing because ultra-modern, whirlwind trips to these central academies are used to reinforce both centralism and traditional revolutionary virtues: Maoism reduced to a consumerist package tour.

Currently, large numbers of cadres from China's routinely partake in pilgrimage-like trips across the nation and abroad to the sacred sites of China's revolution and market reforms and the world capitalist system, thereby also impressing upon these cadres the message that administrative civilization somehow is spawned by economic success and exposure to the West. Most importantly, it reinforces the notion that modernity is unequally and hierarchically distributed and thus by necessity to be found elsewhere, to be studied, emulated and, ultimately, surpassed.

6. The erosion of local party schools

The rapid growth of a whole range of expensive training facilities and off-site programmes has come at price, even apart from their financial costs. The main reason that the Centre has encouraged the diversification of cadre training was dissatisfaction with the quality and variety of training provided in traditional party schools, particularly at the local level, and it is indeed there that the pain of the reforms is felt most.

As we have seen in the previous section, the national and provincial party schools and schools of administration are full-fledged institutes of higher education and research, in addition to their specialized function of the provision of short-term main courses. Provincial schools are to all intents and purposes smaller versions of the central schools, which includes the important right independently to confer degrees. However, at lower levels of the administrative hierarchy this right no longer exists, and it would be a mistake to think (as I did initially) that prefectural and county level schools are simply lesser copies of the provincial and central schools.

During visits to the prefectural schools in Qujing and Honghe and the county level schools in the urban district of Qilin and the counties of Yiliang and Shilin, all in Yunnan province, I came away with very mixed impressions. Sure enough, all schools had an organizational setup that was a trimmed-down version of higher-level schools, much like other government and party departments at all levels are built on the same template. All schools also fulfilled their core task of teaching short-term main training courses for cadres of the rank appropriate to a school at their level, and organized teaching for correspondence degree courses (see below).

Funding at levels below the province tended to be much less generous than higher up. All schools had responded to the lack of funding by active involvement in the market for degree courses. As already discussed above, they could only do this by organizing such course work for degrees of other higher education institutions, capitalizing on their assets (buildings, teaching and administrative staff) and proximity to potential students. One other common adaptation to restricted funding was to merge not only the party school and the school of administration, but also the local school of socialism into one institution, a practice frowned upon by higher levels, but probably unavoidable in the absence of targeted central subsidies.

However, other responses to the financial realities of local government were perhaps less straightforward, and in several ways compromised at least in part the institutional integrity of

such schools. From my limited exposure to just five local party schools it obviously is difficult to generalize, and indeed at all of the five schools I visited the situation was different. What they all seem to have in common however is that the main financial constraint pertained to the recurrent budgetary allocation from the local government that pays for the salaries of permanent staff (*bianzhi*) and recurrent costs. At Yiliang county, for instance, the party school's budget had been consistently reduced in recent years, forcing the school to send many of their staff in early retirement, leaving only 17 established staff (including a driver and three administrators), supplemented by external teachers hired for specific sessions or classes. Even so, the school's budget was not enough fully to carry out the tasks assigned to it in the county cadre education and training plan, and the school relied heavily on income from degree classes to make up the shortfall.⁴³

Several schools that faced considerable hardship as far as their annual budgetary allocation was concerned actually occupied spacious new premises. In central and provincial schools, new buildings came had been paid for with one-off investment, not from the government's finance department, but from the planning commission (now development and reform commission). Such projects had been approved under central pressure to strengthen the infrastructure of party training since 2002. However, at the Shilin County Party School self-generated income was the sole source of an investment of 3.2 million yuan in the schools new premises, attesting to the fact that, like so many other local government departments, local party schools were left to fend for themselves.⁴⁴

During my interview with him, the head of the Shilin school summarized very candidly what the reduction in budget had led to. The county's allocated budget paid only for the salaries of the school's 21 permanent staff, 14 of whom were teachers. All other costs, including running the school's office, maintenance of buildings, equipment and fees to pay for external teachers from the income that the school itself could generate (*chuangshou*). This income consisted of a further budgetary allocation from the finance department for the fees for students on main courses, and so-called extra-budgetary income from the fees paid by students on degree courses.⁴⁵ Of the latter they could only retain 30 per cent, with the rest going to the provincial and central schools

⁴³ See group interview with the leadership of Yiliang County Party School, 27 November 2004.

⁴⁴ Interview Huang, Head of Shilin County Party School, 28 November 2004.

⁴⁵ *Chuangshou* ("creating income") is a pervasive practice within the Chinese state sector. An institution's created income falls outside the regular budget of that institution (and is thus termed "extrabudgetary") and can be used at its own discretion. Since 2000, the extrabudgetary income of administrative departments and governments has been brought under more direct central control and is now more of a separate funding stream than invisible treasures (*xiao jinku*) completely beyond the scrutiny and control of higher levels as reported on in studies of county administrations in the 1990s (Pieke 1996, chapter 4, Wong 1997; Wong 1998 and Whiting 2001). Like other departments, party schools first had to transfer their self-created income to the finance department of the higher level government and then received a fixed percentage back as a separate, "extrabudgetary" allocation. Furthermore, expenditure from both in-budget and extrabudgetary income had to be approved by the government's finance department. See interview with Huang, Head of Shilin County Party School, 28 November 2004 and group interview with the leadership of Yiliang County Party School, 27 November 2004.

whose degrees they teach. The budgetary allocation from the finance department was in fact so low that three of the teachers supplemented their salary with commercial businesses they have set under their wife's name. Almost unheard of at higher level schools, the teacher with the largest business went as far as refusing to join the party, because this would restrict his freedom in taking care of the business.⁴⁶

At the time of my visit in 2004, the county's total budget for cadre training, including such items as expensive inspection and study tours in other parts of China, was 2 million yuan. However, from this, the party school only received the salaries for its 21 staff, the teachers of whom earned a monthly salary of about 1600 yuan, and 40 yuan per main course student per day, a sum that was just enough to cover the cost of their lodging and food. With 21 staff and 2,000 main course students trained on average seven days, the total budgetary allocation to the school could therefore not have been more than one million yuan per year. At the same time, the school's total extrabudgetary income was also about one million yuan, of which it could retain and spend about 300,000 yuan.⁴⁷

Despite its tight budget, the school's contribution to cadre training was important in Shilin, whose Stone Forest only 50 miles from Kunming is a major domestic and international tourist attraction. The fact that 2,000 students had taken main courses in 2004 constituted a sharp increase compared to the about 500 students in the past. The chief explanation for this rise was that cadre training very heavily emphasized the skills required by Shilin's exposure to the outside world: proper Mandarin Chinese (especially important because many local cadres were members of non-Han minorities), computer skills, electronic government and English. Conspicuously absent from the list of core subjects of training courses were theory and ideology, a staple of training at all the prefectural, provincial and central schools that I visited.⁴⁸

While this particular school was fully engaged in teaching both main courses and degree courses, in other respects it was at risk of becoming somewhat of an empty shell. Not only was its staff increasingly attracted by the glittering prizes on offer in China's booming market economy, but the main courses taught at the school were predominantly aimed at improving cadres linguistic and administrative skills with little attention paid to ideological training. An even more interesting and extreme case of the impact of the market economy on a bulwark of socialist governance was the party school of Qilin city district in Qujing prefecture in eastern Yunnan, where capitalism came in the form of the commercialization and privatization of education.

In Qilin district, a county-level administration, the party school no longer had its own premises: since 2003, it had become simply a sign at the gate at the Qilin district vocational upper middle school.⁴⁹ This school was a semi-private undertaking, and showed all the signs of success: very large, ostentatious premises, well-equipped classrooms, a very comfortable meeting room and a

⁴⁶ Field notes 28 November 2004.

⁴⁷ Interview Huang, Head of Shilin County Party School, 28 November 2004.

⁴⁸ Interview Huang, Head of Shilin County Party School, 28 November 2004.

⁴⁹ See their brochure "A short introduction to the national level keypoint vocational school the *Qujing City Qilin District Vocational High-level Middle School*" (Guojiaji zhongdian zhixiao *Qujing Qilin qu zhiye gaoji zhongxue jianjie*).

well-rehearsed routine to receive outside visitors. The school mainly catered for the rapidly growing market for vocational training and education, in addition to local government contracts. These contracts did not only include the party school, but also short-term courses for farmers that had been evicted from their land to make room for the district's development zone funded under the national government's programme to open up the West (*xibu da kaifa*). These courses trained farmers before they joined government teams of contract workers that were sent to work in the developed coastal areas in Fujian and Guangdong.

In Qilin, cadre training – and in fact the whole party school – thus had become fully enmeshed in the commercialization of the educational sector. The party school's responsibilities included both short-term (five days) main courses for local township (*zhen*) and street (*jiedao*) cadres of section or deputy section (*zhengke* or *fuke*) rank, main courses for deputy office (*fuchu*) level cadres in the urban district, and *xueli* degree courses of Yunnan Teachers College, the Central Party School and the Provincial Party School at the middle vocational, upper vocational and undergraduate level. Because the party school only received an annual budget of 100,000 yuan and six staff from the district government, most of the teaching was done by hiring in teachers from the prefectural party school, from Yunnan Teachers College, or from elsewhere in the area.⁵⁰

From my interviews at the school it remained unclear what exactly the incentive structure was that made the party school's tasks attractive to the middle school, but clearly the arrangement was part of a wider web of patronage relations between the local government and the school's leadership. What is clear from this example and the previous one is that the financial constraints of county governments made operating fully independent party schools a very difficult proposition. As in many other policy areas, central government requirements put great strain on county governments, while the same central government at the same time reduces their fiscal autonomy and sources of extrabudgetary and off-budget income. In the case of party schools, considerable creativity has been applied to come up with workable arrangements that would allow party schools to be in effect cross-subsidized by commercial activities going beyond the profitable degree teaching that had already been an important source of income for a long time. In sum, even in cadre training, the ideological heart of Leninist governance, the impact of market reforms was increasingly felt, and, as so often, this happened first and most visibly at the lowest levels of government.

However, financial constraints are not the only contributory factor to the erosion of local level party schools. As we have seen, policies since 2000 have quite deliberately allowed for competition between different providers of cadre training in an attempt to break down the monopoly of party schools.

The effect of this was clearly visible at the prefectural party school in Honghe in southern Yunnan during my visit in 2004. According to the signs outside the school's main entrance, the party school doubles up as not only as the school of administration and the school of socialism, but also as the school for minority cadres of whom there are many in this southern frontier area. However, unlike the provincial party school or even the prefectural school in Qujing, these

⁵⁰ Field notes 18 November 2004.

multiple signs turned out to be just that: mere signs. The school itself only occupied itself with party school cadre training and teaching for various degree courses, but had little to do with the organization of the various forms of non-party cadre training that fall under the headings of the school of administration, the school of socialism and the school for minority cadres. Instead of being a comprehensive institution for all aspects of cadre training, the school merely provided teachers, classroom and boarding facilities if requested by other local administrative agencies.

Training of non-CCP leading cadres, the prerogative of the school of socialism, was fully in the hands of the CCP's United Front Department. During my visit, the "sixth non-CCP leading cadre training class" was just underway, and it was quite revealing how little the school's administrators knew or cared about it, despite the fact that many of their teachers (including one of the deputy heads of the school herself!) had been enlisted to teach specific sessions. Yet this, as a non-CCP cadre course, was the responsibility of the school of socialism, which was, as in all other prefectures in Yunnan, part of the party school's remit. The deputy head of the United Front Department, who was in charge of the course, explained the role of his own department and that of the School of Socialism as follows:

Each year at the beginning of the year, the cadre education committee of Honghe Prefecture Party Committee draws up a cadre training plan, and each year this course must be offered. This falls under the United Front Department's own plan that we coordinate with the cadre education committee. Their general plan incorporates the United Front Department's own plan. The cadre education committee's plan is shaped from top to bottom. After a course is over we have to submit a written report for filing. The responsibility to draw up the [United Front Department's] education plan lies with our cadre section, after which we consult and report to the School of Socialism. As a final step, it is examined and approved by the cadre education committee. Question: Why do you offer the course here [at the party school]? Answer: This is a school for cadre training, their focus is on adult training. The emphasis of training organized by the government's personnel bureau is professional training, but much of this course is about inculcating political theory (...) We have contact with the School of Socialism, because our training tasks are the same. Our training is also a task in the School of Socialism's own training plan, and they provide their classrooms free of charge. It is their task to make sure that they consult with related departments.⁵¹

It is quite interesting that in the above quote the head of the United Front mentions that the fact that this course is also part of the party school's educational plan as a reason for organizing the course here. However, on the very next day I interviewed a deputy head of the party school, who explained the lack of involvement in the organization of the course exactly because it was not part of the school's plan. Clearly, the language of bureaucratic planning was pragmatically employed very differently by these two informants to describe and rationalize the reality of school's uncomfortable position the local administration.

A similar situation existed regarding other types of training as well. Categorical courses for female cadres, for instance, although taught at the school, were considered the Women's

⁵¹ Interview Du Lei, 1 December 2004.

Federation's responsibility and not part of the school's plan. As far as minority cadre training was concerned, more cooperation between the school and the government's minority committee existed, and the school helped the committee in finding teachers and designing the courses. However, minority cadre courses continued to be considered principally a responsibility assigned to the minority committee under the prefectural cadre education plan. As a result, the committee liaised directly with the party's organization department in selecting students and the government's finance department to obtain funds. Interestingly, no mention of the party's united front department was made, whose involvement in minority work was much less than with non-CCP cadre work.⁵²

In the case of training courses that are part of the school of administration's remit, the situation was even more extreme. Disagreements with the government's personnel bureau had led to the almost complete removal of all courses from the party school's premises. Instead, the personnel bureau had made alternative arrangements with other schools in the area and only a few novice civil servants training courses had been held at the party school.⁵³ Obviously, this could also be read as a mere shift of emphasis. In other party schools courses are also organized together with the relevant part of the local administration and on the basis of the local annual cadre training plan. However, as we have seen in the section on the Yunnan provincial school, that school insisted that such courses were simply part of its educational plan and retained considerable autonomy in decisions about the curriculum and selection of teachers, an autonomy that was completely missing in Honghe.

7. Cadre training and the Chinese state's changing mode of reproduction

Like with so many courses and schools around the world, the most important gains of cadre training are not in the curriculum, but in the experience. Cadre training is an experiential realization of the fact of belonging to the party, or at least the state apparatus. It is thus a form of socialization and exercise in community formation in which even boredom and wasted time serve a function: it makes cadres feel they are different, set apart from the public, and are special in their belonging to something most people are excluded from. Training thus serves to realize the Leninist vision of what cadres: the party's chief instrument of a meritocratic rule. In this political philosophy, cadres are the opposite of the "people" (*renmin*) or the "masses" (*qunzhong*) whom they lead. Cadres are also contrasted to the ordinary members of the party, who may have a strong ideological commitment but are not fully involved in day-to-day management and leadership.

Equally important, in cadre training students learn as much from other students as from the teachers, and the relationships formed during training are an important lubricant of the administrative system, or, as one informant said in a play on Marxist political economy,

⁵² Interview with the head of the cadre section of the Minorities Committee of Honghe Prefecture, 2 December 2004; see also interview Feng, deputy head of the Honghe Prefectural Party School, 2 December 2004 and interview Du Lei, 1 December 2004.

⁵³ Field notes 1 and 3 December 2004; Feng, deputy head of the Honghe Prefectural Party School, 2 December 2004.

“relationships are a production force” (*guanxi shi shengchanli*).⁵⁴ Much time during training courses is spent talking, smoking, eating, drinking and playing sports with cadres from elsewhere or one’s own area, establishing and reinforcing relationships that make the solution of some future problem perhaps only one mobile phone call away. This function can only really be played by non-vocational political training, because only here do cadres meet others that are not normally employed in their own specialized area. In this sense, the lack of substance and generality of cadre training are in fact a precondition of the success of cadre training at community formation.

However, the attention lavished on cadre training in recent years goes well beyond any intended or unintended practical use that such training might have. Well-funded party schools have become a powerful symbolic tool to assert the vitality of a reconstructed socialism and more generally the new administrative ethos that underpin the CCP’s claim to be China’s legitimate ruling party. Central schools for cadres (the National School of Administration, the Central Party School and the three new cadre academies in Shanghai, Yan’an and Jinggangshan) are now flush with central funds. Other parts of China have also invested heavily in their local party schools, particularly at the provincial level and in large cities. This is most clearly the case with the party schools in Shanghai and Shenzhen. The ostentatious modernity of the party schools there and their role as hosts of pilgrimage-like study tours of cadres from all over China serve not only as a constant reminder that they are the developmental model for the rest of China, but also as their acknowledgement of the fact that their new wealth and stability hinges on continued patronage from a unambiguously socialist central government.

However, my own work at the local level in Yunnan shows that there is a different side to all of this. Prefectural and particularly county party schools are often neglected and face financial difficulties similar to those of many other local government departments. The central emphasis on cadre training and reform of the cadre system is still clearly hamstrung by the requirement that local governments are self-funding. Only economically successful areas can actually afford to buy into the central government’s vision of sanitized socialist governance. The widening gap between rich and poor areas is about more than economic growth and wealth alone: poorer areas cannot fully partake in China’s new, glossy socialism, and will not only economically, but also politically and administratively be left behind.

My study of cadre training reveals that the centre’s impatience to realize its vision of high modernist socialist governance is beginning to undermine more traditional forms of socialist governance. However, without the funds to pay for the trappings of modern socialism, poorer areas in China may now at risk administrative erosion that may in the long run even further increase the gap with the developed parts of the country. In contrast to Maoist times, in contemporary China, getting rich rather than staying poor is the way to achieve high socialism. In the absence of rapid economic growth in China’s poorer areas, the only solution to counter the administrative degradation there will be a massive transfer of resources from the centre, a form of political development aid that parallels the economic development aid of for instance the Opening of the West programme.

⁵⁴ Field notes 1 December 2004.

Marketization of cadre training is eroding the institutional integrity of local party schools. One obvious reason for this is that central policy has quite deliberately put an end to the monopoly of party schools, allowing other providers to enter this increasingly lucrative market. This has had a particularly adverse impact on low-level party schools that, unlike national and provincial schools, are very small institutions that have been consistently starved of funding. Furthermore, party schools find it increasingly hard to compete in this market because cadre training now emphasizes professional over non-ideological skills. Normal universities and other institutions for higher learning are much better equipped to provide such training than the small and understaffed party schools in counties and prefectures. A final reason that local party schools are losing out in the market is that cadre training and education have become somewhat of an item of conspicuous consumption. As in many companies in the capitalist West, training has become a way to award and incentivize employees, and is as much a way of tying them to the company as to equip them with new skills and knowledge. Against that background, the local party school quite simply is no longer up to it as far as China's increasingly demanding cadres are concerned.

The booming industry that off-site cadre training programmes have become is predicated as much on the new wealth of China and the increased solvency of the Chinese administration, as on the cheapness of travel and the convenience of long-distance communications that are familiar drivers of globalization processes anywhere (Castells 1996). However, national and international study tours and training programmes also draw on long-standing Chinese administrative practices, such as study tours by individual leaders or leadership delegations or periodic meetings at higher administrative levels for coordination, policy dissemination and enforcement of conformity to higher level wishes. However, most striking are perhaps the similarities with the Maoist practice of establishing advanced models (such as the famous Dazhai agricultural brigade or the Daqing oilfields in the 1960s). During the Maoist period, models illustrated by example what a leader wished to achieve. Models were faithfully studied by visiting delegations from across the nation, which were supposed to emulate the famous example upon their return home. International and national programmes for cadre training can thus be read as a specifically Chinese (and Maoist-Leninist) way that globalization processes play out in the context of China's market reform and opening to the West. They are, in other words, as much a part of the unfolding pattern of Chinese globalization as, for instance, the new Chinese migration or the flow of international capital in and out of China (Pieke, Nyíri et al. 2004). As I have shown in this section, the outcome of at least this aspect of Chinese globalization has not been a weakening of the Chinese government, the Communist Party, or Communism, but a modernization of Leninist administration and, if anything, a strengthening of central control.

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